

maintaining essential city services. With her guidance, Riverview has become a model of responsible and effective governance in the Downriver community. Mrs. Blanchette also serves Riverview as a representative on the Wayne County Community Development Block Grant Advisory Council, which helps develop affordable housing for the city and the surrounding communities. Her leadership in this capacity has been critical to helping create inclusive development and housing that is accessible to all.

Mrs. Blanchette's public service has been invaluable in creating the vibrant Riverview community that exists today. Her dedication and hard work on behalf of the city has driven development and improved quality of life, and she is well-known for her hard work in the best interest of Riverview's residents. Mrs. Blanchette is widely respected for her efforts to maintain fiscal discipline while providing quality public service to the city, and it is my hope that she continues to build on her successes in the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Lynn Blanchette and her 25 years of service to the Riverview community as a member of the Riverview City Council. Her work on behalf of Riverview has played a key role in helping create a more livable city and improve life for its residents.

THE PREVENTING TERMINATION  
OF UTILITY SERVICES IN BANK-  
RUPTCY ACT OF 2017

**HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 3, 2017*

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, utility companies provide many basic and life-saving services, such as electricity to light our homes, water to drink, and gas to heat our homes. Sometimes, however, individuals, through no fault of their own, struggle to pay for these services often in the face of devastating medical debt, job loss, or economic disruption caused by divorce. While resorting to bankruptcy provides some relief from financial distress, current law permits utility companies to force these debtors to pay security deposits for continued service even if they were current on their bills before filing for bankruptcy or if they promise to be current on their bills after bankruptcy. Utility companies typically insist that debtors pay at least two months or more of their average bills as a deposit—in addition to requiring that they remain current on their utility bills after bankruptcy—in exchange for the utility continuing to supply service.

The “Preventing Termination of Utility Service in Bankruptcy Act of 2017” corrects this injustice. It provides that if the debtor remains current on his or her utility bills after filing for bankruptcy relief, the debtor should not have

to pay a deposit to the utility to continue service.

In Detroit, for example, families across the city have seen their water rates increase by 119% over the past decade. During the same period, the Nation generally and Detroit in particular suffered in the aftermath of a global financial crisis that left one-in-five local residences in foreclosure and sent local unemployment rates skyrocketing.

Fortunately, we are incrementally recovering from the Great Recession of 2008. For those individuals who must seek bankruptcy relief, however, we should ensure that their ability to pay their utility bills going forward is not hindered by unnecessary demands for deposits if these debtors remain current on their payments to these companies.

Terminating a family's access to such life-saving services that keeps the lights on, warms our homes, and ensures that they can bathe, hydrate, and prepare meals is simply wrong if these utility bills are being paid on time.

This legislation is part of a range of solutions that are needed to address the still pervasive adverse impacts of the Great Recession of 2008. I continue to work with my colleagues in Congress, state and federal officials, and my constituents to defend the right to water and protect public health. I will not tolerate the notion that—in the 21st Century, in the wealthiest nation on earth—families should go without access to affordable public water and sanitation services.